

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 OES-07 SP-02 PM-05 ACDA-07
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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APPROVED BY OES/APT/SA:RBEDDINGTON
NASA/YZ/TBKERR (IN DRAFT)
NASA/F/KMORRIS (IN DRAFT)
NASA/I/AWFRUTKIN (IN DRAFT)
S/P-WGATHRIGHT(IN DRAFT)
PM/ISO-CCORDER
AF/I-WRCARROLL
PM/ISP-MMICHAUD

-----003102 060548Z /10

P 052109Z AUG 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MASERU PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MBABANE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TSPA

SUBJECT: NASA LAUNCH OF VOYAGER SPACECRAFT

1. NASA PLANS LAUNCHINGS AUGUST 20 AND SEPTEMBER 1 OF TWO
VOYAGER SPACECRAFT FOR INVESTIGATION OF OUTER PLANETS --
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JUPITER, SATURN, URANUS. THE TWO SPACECRAFT WILL CONTINUE
OUTWARD FROM THE SOLAR SYSTEM INTO INTERSTELLAR SPACE.

2. BOTH SPACECRAFT CONTAIN NUCLEAR-FUELED RADIOISOTOPE
DEVICES SIMILAR TO THOSE USED ON PREVIOUS PLANETARY
MISSIONS FOR POWER TO SPACECRAFT COMPONENTS.

3. DEVICES ARE RADIOISOTOPE THERMOELECTRIC GENERATORS (RTG) AND RADIOISOTOPE HEATER UNITS (RHU). A SINGLE 2400 THERMAL WATT HEAT SOURCE ASSEMBLY FOR EACH RTG IS CONTAINED IN A BERYLLIUM GENERATOR HOUSING. EACH RTG IS DESIGNED TO FURNISH AT LEAST 128 WATTS OF ELECTRICAL POWER FOR FOUR YEARS AFTER LAUNCH. THE SOURCE IS AN ISOTOPE MIXTURE OF PLUTONIUM DIOXIDE (PUO2), CONTAINING 80.2 PERCENT PU-238 ISOTOPE. EACH RHU CONTAINS ONE THERMAL WATT OF PUO2.

4. USE OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL ON THESE MISSIONS COULD PROVOKE INQUIRIES IN CASE OF AN ABORT OR ACCIDENT.

5. AN EXTENSIVE NUCLEAR SAFETY REVIEW OF THE VOYAGER MISSION SHOWS THAT ANY HAZARDS TO PEOPLE AND PROPERTY ARE MINIMAL, AND THE SPACECRAFT HAVE BEEN APPROVED AT TOP-LEVEL REVIEW FOR LAUNCHING.

6. CONTINGENCY PLANS HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR SEARCH AND RECOVERY OF THE NUCLEAR DEVICES IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT VOYAGER SPACECRAFT RETURN TO EARTH BY REASON OF ABORT OR FAILURE IN EARLY STAGE OF MISSION. POSTS WILL BE INFORMED OF ACTIONS REQUIRED AND PRESS GUIDANCE IN REAL-TIME SHOULD THEY BE NEEDED.

7. NASA PRESS KIT ON VOYAGER MISSION BEING AIRPOUCHED.
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TEXT OF THAT PART CONCERNING THE NUCLEAR UNITS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE FORWARDED VIA AIRGRAM. POSTS ARE REQUESTED TO FORWARD TO DEPARTMENT FOR PREPARATION OF RESPONSE ANY QUERIES THAT GO BEYOND MATERIAL FURNISHED.

8. ON AUGUST 20 LAUNCH, IMPACT RANGE IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF AN ABORT WOULD EXTEND ROUGHLY 150 MILES NORTH OR SOUTH OF THE NOMINAL TRAJECTORY WHICH CROSSES SOUTH AFRICA FROM SLIGHTLY NORTH OF CAPE TOWN TO SLIGHTLY SOUTH OF PORT ELIZABETH. FOR SEPTEMBER 1 LAUNCH, IMPACT RANGE IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF AN ABORT WOULD EXTEND ROUGHLY 150 MILES NORTH OR SOUTH OF THENORMAL TRAC-TORY PATH CROSSING FROM NORTH OF LUANDA, ANGOLA THROUGH ZAMBIA, RHODESIA, SOUTHEAST MOZAMBIQUE AND THE SOUTHERN PART OF MADAGASCAR CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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TAGS: TSPA, US
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